

Sturrock penalty rescues Bedford

Bedford 3 Wycombe Wanderers 3

(F.A. Cup, First Rd. Replay, after extra time)



THE toss of a coin gave Isthmian League amateurs Wycombe the right to stage a second replay of this tie for the right to meet Oxford United.

The toss was the final deed of a night that reached a climax in the last minute of extra time.

Referee Malcolm Sinclair was bundled off the field by angry Wycombe fans after he had given Bedford the penalty that enabled them to snatch a draw.

Wycombe centre half Ian Rundle handled in front of goal and Bedford's Dave Sturrock cracked home the shot that kept Bedford hopes alive.

It was a bitter blow for Wycombe, who had fought desperately to hold on to a single goal lead they had richly earned after the shock of a Sturrock goal in the 41st minute.

They levelled with a 25-yard drive from centre forward Paul Bates and powered to the lead in the 80th minute when Tony Horseman nipped in to head past goalkeeper Alan Collier.

Then Bedford's David Skinn dived full length to squeeze in a header from a Sturrock corner and commit the sides to extra time.

What a 30-minute cliff-hanger that proved to be!

Les Merrick eventually baffled the Bedford defence and waltzed through to stroke the ball past Collier.

Then came that late equaliser.

Toss-up ends Bedford replay row

By ALEX BANNISTER

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REFEREE Malcolm Sinclair, of Guildford, was jostled and pushed by protesting Wycombe supporters as he left the field last night.

He had awarded a strongly disputed penalty in the last minute of extra time in this FA Cup first-round replay.

As soon as the whistle went Wycombe players renewed their protests, which had begun as soon as the decision was made. Mr. Sinclair had difficulty in making his way to the stands.

His decision, in my opinion, was excessively harsh, for the ball appeared to run up Rundle's arm and he had no chance of avoiding it.

Rundle dropped to the ground in tears, and Sturrock's successful penalty gave last year's giant-killers another chance which they scarcely deserved.

The wrangling over where the replay should take place continued long after the game. Eventually, after a toss-up, the venue was fixed at Wycombe on Saturday.

The early stages gave little hint of the excitement to come. Bedford's use of the wing gave them what advantage there was, but their first goal, after 40 minutes by Sturrock, was a speculative centre which caught Maskell five yards out of goal. The ball went through his unstretched hands.

Equalised

Amateurs Wycombe looked a new team after this. In 53 minutes Bates took a 20-yard free kick with his right foot and as the ball cannoned back to him off the defensive wall, he sent it in with his left foot.

Horsman, who has scored 34 of Wycombe's 89 goals this season, headed home John Beck's centre in the 80th minute, but immediately Skinn equalised following Sturrock's corner.

Extra time was seven minutes old when Wycombe's Worley crossed a ball to Merrick which either Morgan or Collins should have intercepted. Merrick, left on his own, could scarcely miss.

The rest was sheer frustration for Bedford. Benning hit a post and Sturrock vainly appealed that his header had crossed the line.

Wycombe seemed sure to meet Oxford United at Oxford in the next round until that disastrous and unfortunate last incident. Bedford were very lucky.

Bedford.—Collier, Morgan, Skinn; Willis, Collins, Corbett; Sturrock, Paton, Fogg, Conley, Benning.

Wycombe Wanderers.—J. Maskell; J. Beck, P. Royston; B. Baker, I. Rundle, C. Gale; L. Worley, K. Samuels, P. Bates, A. Horsman, L. Merrick.